

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service

Poultry Division

# United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits

Effective date March 6, 1995

### **FOREWORD**

These classes, standards, and grades have been developed and are promulgated pursuant to the authorities contained in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, (7 U.S.C. 1621 *et seq.*). The voluntary USDA rabbit grading program operates under these classes, standards, and grades and the rabbit grading regulations. The voluntary program provides for interested parties a national grading service based on official U.S. classes, standards, and grades for rabbits. The costs involved in furnishing this grading program are paid by the user of the service.

The grading program, the Regulations Governing the Voluntary Grading of Poultry Products and Rabbit Products, and the United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits establish a basis for quality and price relationship and enable more orderly marketing. Consumers can purchase officially graded product with the confidence of receiving quality in accordance with the official identification.

Effective December 4, 1995, the United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits were removed from the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR Part 70) and are now maintained by the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture as AMS 70.300 *et seq.* 

This document contains the classes, standards, and grades which are the most current to date. All changes in these sections are enumerated in the bracketed footnotes following the applicable sections.

# United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits

# United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service Poultry Division

# AMS 70.300 et seq.

# **United States Classes of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

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# **United States Classes of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

# §70.300 General.

For the purpose of AMS §§70.300 through 70.302, the classes of ready-to-cook rabbits are fryer or young rabbit and roaster or mature rabbit.

#### §70.301 Fryer or young rabbit.

A fryer or young rabbit is a young rabbit carcass weighing not less than 1 1/2 pounds and rarely more than 3 1/2 pounds processed from a rabbit usually less than 12 weeks of age. The flesh of a fryer or young rabbit is tender and fine grained, and of a bright pearly pink color.

### §70.302 Roaster or mature rabbit.

A roaster or mature rabbit is a mature or old rabbit carcass of any weight, but usually over 4 pounds processed from a rabbit usually 8 months of age or older. The flesh of a roaster or mature rabbit is more firm and coarse grained, and the muscle fiber is slightly darker in color and less tender, and the fat may be more creamy in color than that of a fryer or young rabbit.

# United States Standards for Quality of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits

# §70.310 General.

- (a) The United States standards for quality contained in AMS §§70.320 through 70.322 are applicable to individual carcasses of ready-to-cook rabbits and parts as described in paragraph (e) of this section.
- (b) Carcasses or parts found to be unsound, unwholesome, or unfit for food shall not be included in any of the quality designations specified in AMS §§70.320 through 70.322.
- (c) In interpreting the respective requirements specified in AMS \$\$70.320 through 70.322 for A quality, B quality, and C quality:
  - (1) The intensity of coagulation due to incomplete bleeding,
  - (2) freedom from foreign material,
  - (3) broken bones, flesh bruises, defects, and deformities, and
  - (4) freezing defects,

as such defects individually or in combination, detract from the general appearance, shall be considered in determining the particular quality of an individual carcass or part.

- (d) A ready-to-cook carcass which has a defect may be graded after the defective portion has been removed. The fact that a portion has been removed will not be considered in determining the quality of the balance of the carcass, if the remaining portion of the carcass is to be disjointed and packed as parts. Rabbit parts which have been properly cut as described in paragraph (e) of this section may be graded after they have been cut from the carcass, if the class is known and the parts are not misshapen, or have nearly the same appearance as prior to cutting from the carcass.
- (e) The standards of quality are applicable to rabbit parts cut in the manner described in paragraphs (e) (1) through (5) of this section. Similar parts cut in a manner other than as described in paragraphs (e) (1) through (5) of this section may be grade identified only when approved by the Administrator upon his determination that the labeling for such parts accurately describes the product. Requests for such approval shall be made to the National Supervisor.
- (1) "Forelegs" shall be removed by cutting straight across the backbone at the eighth or ninth thoracic vertebra. The legs are divided by a lengthwise cut along the backbone to produce two approximately equal halves.

- (2) "Ribs" shall be removed by cutting straight across the backbone between the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae. The rib section is further divided by a lengthwise cut along the backbone.
- (3) "Loin" is separated from the rump by cutting straight across the backbone between the sixth and seventh lumbar vertebrae. There is no further division of this part.
- (4) "Rump" is separated from the hind legs by cutting on a straight line from the base of the tail to a point approximately 1/2 inch above the stifle joint. There is no further division of the rump.
  - (5) "Hind legs" need no further division after separation from the rump.

## **Standards for Quality**

## §70.320 A Quality.

- (a) The carcass or part:
- (1) Is free from evidence of incomplete bleeding such as more than an occasional slight coagulation in a vein,
- (2) is free from any evidence of reddening of the flesh due to fluid in the connective tissues.
- (3) is free from all foreign material (including, but not being limited to, hair, dirt, and bone particles) and from crushed bones caused by removing the head or the feet, and
- (4) is free from broken bones, flesh bruises, defects, and deformities. Ends of leg bones may be broken due to removing the feet.
  - (b) *The carcass:*
  - (1) Is short, thick, well-rounded, and full-fleshed,
- (2) has a broad back, broad hips, and broad, deep-fleshed shoulders, and firm muscle texture, and
- (3) has a fair quantity of interior fat in the crotch and over the inner walls of the carcass, and a moderate amount of interior fat around the kidneys.
  - (c) *The part:*
  - (1) Is full-fleshed and
  - (2) has firm muscle texture.
- (d) *Freezing defects*. With respect to consumer packaged rabbit carcasses or parts, they are practically free from defects which result from handling or occur during freezing or storage. The following defects are permitted if they, alone or in combination, detract only very slightly from the appearance of the carcass or part:
  - (1) Slight darkening provided the frozen carcass or part has a generally bright appearance,
  - (2) occasional pockmarks due to drying of the outer layer of flesh and
  - (3) occasional small areas showing a thin layer of clear or pinkish colored ice.

## §70.321 B Quality.

- (a) The carcass or part:
- (1) Is free of evidence of incomplete bleeding such as more than an occasional slight coagulation in a vein,

- (2) is free from any evidence of reddening of the flesh due to fluid in the connective tissues.
- (3) is free from all foreign material (including, but not being limited to, hair, dirt, and bone particles) and from crushed bones caused by removing the head or the feet, and
- (4) is free from broken bones and practically free from bruises, defects, and deformities. Ends of leg bones may be broken due to removing the feet.
  - (b) *The carcass:*
  - (1) Is short, thick, fairly well-rounded and fairly well-fleshed,
- (2) has a fairly broad back, fairly broad hips, and fairly broad and deep-fleshed shoulders, and fairly firm muscle texture, and
- (3) has at least a small amount of interior fat in the crotch and over the inner walls of the carcass with a small amount of interior fat around the kidneys.
  - (c) *The part:*
  - (1) Is fairly well-fleshed, and
  - (2) has fairly firm muscle texture.
- (d) *Freezing defects*. With respect to consumer packaged rabbit carcasses or parts, they may have moderate defects which result from handling or occur during freezing or storage. The flesh shall have a sound appearance but may lack brightness. The carcass or part may have a few pockmarks due to drying of the outer layer of flesh. Moderate areas showing layers of clear, pinkish, or reddish colored ice are permitted.

# §70.322 C Quality.

- (a) *The carcass or part* that does not meet the requirements for A or B quality may be of C quality, and such carcass or part:
- (1) May show very slight evidence of reddening of the flesh due to blood in the connective tissues.
- (2) is free from all foreign material (including, but not being limited to, hair, dirt, and bone particles) and from crushed bones caused by removing the head or feet, and
- (3) may have moderate bruises of the flesh, moderate defects, and moderate deformities; may have not more than one broken bone in addition to broken ends of leg bones due to removal of the feet; and may have a small portion of the carcass or part removed because of serious bruises. Discoloration due to bruising in the flesh shall be free of clots (discernible clumps of dark or red cells).
  - (b) The carcass:
  - (1) May be long, rangy, and fairly well-fleshed,
  - (2) may have thin, narrow back and hips, and soft flabby muscle texture, and
  - (3) may show very little evidence of exterior fat.
  - (c) *The part:*
  - (1) Is fairly well-fleshed, and
  - (2) has soft, flabby muscle texture.

#### **United States Consumer Grades for Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

#### §70.330 U.S. Grade A.

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for A quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade A.

### §70.331 U.S. Grade B.

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for B quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade B.

### §70.332 U.S. Grade C.

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for C quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade C.

[41 FR 2368, June 11, 1976. Redesignated at 42 FR 32514, June 27, 1977, and at 46 FR 63203, Dec. 3, 1981, and amended at 47 FR 46071, Oct. 15, 1982; 47 FR 54421, Dec. 3, 1982]